



FIRST THINGS FIRST

The right system for bright futures

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First Things First Approves Allocation of \$68 Million State-Wide for Children Birth through Five

On December 2 and 3, 2008 the State Board for First Things First approved over \$68 million in funding specific to improving the health and development of children birth through five. Of the six First Things First Goal areas, the State Board approved funding for five of those. The six goal areas are:

1. Family Support- Funding Approved
2. Quality and Access- Funding Approved
3. Health- Funding Approved
4. Professional Development- Funding Approved
5. System Coordination- Funding Approved
6. Communications- Funding Pending

Programs and services that expand and improve upon family support for children birth through five received a majority of the funding with approximately \$19 million allocated state-wide. Nearly all of the Regional Partnership Councils throughout the State recognized that parents and families are one of the most valuable resources any community has and, as such, should be supported to provide for their child's optimal health and developmental growth. The White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council was approved to allocate funding in the amount of \$159,000 toward family support programs and services in our region.

The second largest amount of funding will be targeted to improving the quality of and accessibility to child care throughout the state. Approximately \$16 million will go toward helping child care centers and homes improve their quality while at the same time making more child care slots available in areas where child care is greatly needed.

Third, Regional Partnership Councils throughout the State will allocate approximately \$12 million in funding to improve the health of children birth through five. The White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council has devoted \$75,000 of its Year 1 budget to the prevention of dental disease in children birth through age five. Other Regional Partnership Councils in the State will also be focusing on a dental varnish program in order to prevent dental disease in young children.

Knowing that services cannot be provided unless adequate staff is available, professional development is an area that many regions will be targeting for funding. Approximately 13.74% or \$9 million will be allocated state-wide for professional development programs in order to train, recruit and retain highly qualified and skilled professionals in various fields relating to early childhood health and development.

The last goal area that was approved for funding distribution is Coordination. In order to create an effective early childhood health and development system, all service providers must be coordinated. Knowing that coordination among providers is key to the success of any system; many regions will be allocating funding specifically for coordination. In total, approximately \$1 million will be distributed state-wide for these efforts.

In addition to the state-wide funding that has been approved for allocation in the regions, the White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council was the only region to be approved for increased communications efforts in our region. The hope is that more people will be willing to participate in the U.S. Census in 2010 so that, potentially, more funding can be allocated to the region for early childhood health and development needs.

With the funding amounts approved by the First Things First State Board, the next phase will be to roll out Requests for Grant Applications in the community with funds being awarded and disseminated in July 2009. However, the work cannot be successfully completed without the support of community members, programs and service providers that want to improve the health and development of the youngest members of our population.

Should you have any questions or would like more information about First Things First, please feel free to contact Rochelle Lacapa at (928) 532-5041 or via email at rlacapa@azftf.gov.